

CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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Board of Forestry and Fire Protection Adopts Emergency Regulation for Wildfire Hazard Reduction

The California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection yesterday passed an emergency rule package granting regulatory relief for hazardous fuel treatments on private timberlands. It is expected this regulation will become effective before the end of the month for a 120 day period.

This regulation is intended to give "Communities at Risk" and landowners in the wildland urban interface an economically feasible way to reduce the risk of damage and loss associated with catastrophic fire and direct threats to their homes. It is one of many important tools designed to help landowners in the creation of defensible areas around their homes and communities in the face of a wildland fire.

The regulation will 1) effectively reduce fire hazards, 2) minimize impacts to environmental values and, 3) provide economic incentives through regulatory relief. It allows for the removal of vegetation, including smaller understory trees (those less than about 26 inches in diameter at breast height), surface fuels, and ladder fuels if certain conditions are met:

1. Provides that smaller trees must be removed to achieve the desired results and will be the primary focus of removal efforts.
2. The post treatment stand must meet stocking requirements for thinning as defined in the California Forest Practice Rules. This ensures that post treatment a well-stocked stand will exist.
3. Post treatment canopy closure must exceed 50%. This means that at least 50% coverage canopy over the forest floor will exist after operations.

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4. No operations are permissible on steep slopes, near watercourses, or during winter months.

5. This regulation is designated for use within ¼ mile of structures in “Communities at Risk” as defined by the California Fire Alliance, or within 500 feet of structures and evacuation routes, such as public roads, fuelbreak ridges, and associated infrastructure facilities.

Emergency conditions for these types of operations will be verified by a Registered Professional Forester (RPF). The RPF will be responsible for marking and designation of the timber and vegetation to be removed.

The Board issued findings regarding the rule package, declaring:

The values at stake in wildland fire protection are extensive and at imminent threat;

There is a reasonable likelihood that the risk of wildfire is above normal for 2004 in both northern and southern California;

The combination of fuel, weather and valuable human and natural resource assets has created an increasing amount of wildfire and associated losses;

Given these factors among others, the Board declares an emergency condition is found relating to wildfire threat and hazardous fuel conditions in the state’s private timberlands

The Board is continuing deliberations toward the possible adoption of permanent regulations that would provide long term regulatory relief under similar circumstances.

The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection is a nine-member body appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The Board, by statute, represents the State’s interests in forestry matters.

For further information, contact George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection.

http://www.fire.ca.gov/CDFBOFDB/board/board_current_docs.aspx